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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003121

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SUBJECT: BAGHDAD SECURITY PLAN MOVES TOWARD NORMALCY IN
SOME AREAS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3015
 1B. BAGHDAD 2997
 1C. BAGHDAD 2969

Classified By: COL Kenneth Fisher, Deputy PRT Team Leader, reasons 1.5
(b) and (d).

Summary

11. (C) Leaders in Baghdad District Advisory Councils (DAC) continue to praise the improved security situation resulting from the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) initiatives in focus areas throughout the city (reftels). To encourage further normalcy of the city's neighborhoods, Coalition Forces (CF) are working to re-establish municipal services and create employment opportunities as USAID's Community Stabilization Program (CSP) and other programs come on-line with more long-term economic initiatives. DAC leaders, however, have expressed their lack of confidence in and frustration with the Provincial Council, which is supposed to fund operational costs and approve the special reconstruction projects for the nine urban DACs. To date, the DACs have received only a fraction of their operational budgets and have seen no new projects completed in their Districts. These issues remain among the top priorities for the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). With security slowly returning, it is crucial for the city's mid and long-term development that the DACs and the provincial government forge a functional, productive relationship on financial management and other administrative issues. END COMMENT.

BSP Focus Areas

12. (S) BSP initiatives are underway in Masafee/Al Doura/Zubaida areas of Al Rasheed District, in the Adhamiyah area of Adhamiyah District, in Shula/Nur areas of Kadhimiyah District, and in Ameriya/Ghazaliya areas of Al Mansour District. They are scheduled to expand to other areas in the beginning of September.

13. (C) In a series of meetings with PRT officers over the week of August 20, District Advisory Council (DAC) officials expressed their perceptions of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) and the resulting improved security, the return to normalcy through re-established municipal services and employment opportunities, and their working relationship with the Provincial Council.

Perceptions of Security and Local Involvement

14. (C) Local contacts in BSP focus areas continue to praise the initiative's success and call for its expansion. While general security has improved markedly in the focus areas,

perceptions of danger remain firmly ensconced in the minds of most Baghdad residents. Most residents also question if the improved security is sustainable by Iraqi security forces. Initial reports indicate that some shops and markets have begun to re-open and some internally displaced persons (IDPs) have begun to return, though slowly. DAC members continue to note the provincial government's lack of engagement with the BSP. They have repeatedly requested provincial leaders visit the BSP focus areas, but no known visits have occurred to date. Additionally, DAC members have stated that having CF - not simply Iraqi military and police - are imperative for the continued success of the BSP.

¶15. (C) Violent crimes have decreased significantly, according to initial reports in the BSP focus areas; however, some DAC members continue to receive threats and attacks for their involvement in the political process.

Community Normalization through Employment Opportunities and Returned Municipal Services

¶16. (C) With security slowly stabilizing in BSP focus areas, CF continue to use short-term projects to return the areas to normalcy through re-establishment of municipal services and day labor employment opportunities. Waterline repair, trash collection, and day labor employment projects have begun in most focus areas. In addition, assessments for other remediation projects, to be funded through the Commander's Emergency Relief Program (CERP) and other means, are underway.

¶17. (C) DAC leaders are generally very supportive of the

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follow-on BSP initiatives, but call for CF to consult more fully with the DACs so that local leaders can provide information to residents on security procedures and employment opportunities. With so much misinformation circulating, DAC members surmise that residents wait for local leaders to endorse programs before the residents participate.

¶18. (U) To support long-term focus stabilization objectives, USAID's Community Stabilization Project (CSP) has begun in Rusafa District and is scheduled to begin in Al Rasheed and Al Adhamiyah Districts in early September. Managed by a US-based USAID implementing partner with local offices, CSP offers short-term employment opportunities, vocational training/apprenticeships, and business grants to stimulate economic opportunities in the focus areas.

DAC Perceptions of the Provincial Government

¶19. (C) Most DAC leaders have expressed their lack of confidence in and frustration with the provincial government, which is supposed to fund operational costs and approve the special reconstruction projects for the nine urban DACs. According to DAC officials, the Provincial Council does not have a clear idea on how to transfer financial resources to the DAC. To date, DACs have only received a fraction of their proposed annual funding. Several DAC chairmen reported that they never expect their reconstruction projects to be funded and carried out. The PRT continues to work with the provincial government to improve communication with the DACs and to ensure that projects are evaluated and implemented in the most efficient, effective manner possible.

¶10. (C) NOTE: There are nine DACs in urban Baghdad, and they are administratively subordinate to and financially dependent on the Provincial Council. Historical power struggles between the Provincial Council and other local government entities, in addition to a legacy of centralized government, have created unclear lines of authority and resource management. There are also six rural Baghdad administrative areas called "Qadas," and their relationship with the

Provincial Council remains unproductive. END NOTE.

Preparing for Ramadan

¶11. (C) In preparation for the holy month of Ramadan, members of several DACs have requested that certain public parks be re-opened for community gatherings after breaking the daily fast and that the Baghdad curfew be extended to 2200 hours so that residents can visit mosques at the last call to prayer.

Comment

¶12. (C) As long as the security situation continues to improve, Baghdad residents are hopeful that they will see the Baghdad Security Plan continue to deliver areas to normalcy through re-establishment of municipal services and through creation of employment opportunities. With security slowly returning, it is crucial for the city's mid and long-term development that the DACs and the provincial government forge a functional, productive relationship. END COMMENT.

SPECKHARD